



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
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# **Gilbert Stuart Middle School**

**PROVIDENCE**

## **THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT**

**February 27, 2004**



### **School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)**

**The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## **The Purpose and Limits of This Report**

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Gilbert Stuart Middle School from February 23 to February 27, 2004.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning, and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well, and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

How well do students learn at Gilbert Stuart Middle School?

How well does the teaching at Gilbert Stuart Middle School affect learning?

How well does Gilbert Stuart Middle School support learning and teaching?

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the report:

Members of the visit team are primarily teachers and administrators from Rhode Island public schools. The majority of team members are teachers. The names and affiliations of the team members are listed at the end of the report.

The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Gilbert Stuart Middle School distinct.

The team did not compare this school to any other school.

When writing the report, the team deliberately chose words that it thought would best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it had learned about the school.

**The team reached consensus on each conclusion, each recommendation, and each commendation in this report.**

The team made its judgment explicit.

This report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report is not based on what the school plans to do in the future or on what it has done in the past.

This school visit is supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as a component of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE deliberately did not participate in the active editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's Chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in Practice-based Inquiry™ (Catalpa Ltd). The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or [ride0782@ride.ri.net](mailto:ride0782@ride.ri.net) for further information about the *Handbook* or other SALT protocols. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are also available at [www.Catalpa.org](http://www.Catalpa.org).

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also assures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

## Sources of Evidence

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

The team spent a total of over 145 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons or classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once. The team also spent approximately 50 hours in talking with various members of the school community.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 32 hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

Important enough to include in the report

Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit

Set in the present, and

Contains the judgment of the team

## Using the Report

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how Gilbert Stuart Middle School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

How your school improvement team reads and considers the report is the critical first step. RIDE will provide a SALT Fellow to lead a follow-up session with the school improvement team to help start the process. With support from the Providence School Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching, and the school, and amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Providence, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Gilbert Stuart Middle School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who only looks at recommendations misses important information.

## **2. PROFILE OF GILBERT STUART MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Gilbert Stuart Middle School is located in the heart of the Elmwood section of the city of Providence, Rhode Island. Built in the early 1900's, the school housed elementary school children until it became a middle school five years ago. The building has a magnificent architectural design. While there have been some renovations, further work needs to be done, both internally and externally. The surrounding neighborhood consists of abandoned houses and buildings, as well as newly renovated schools, houses, businesses, social service agencies, churches and community organizations.

A principal, two assistant principals, more than 70 full-time teachers, an instructional coach, 20 support staff and one full-time parent coordinator service the school. Teacher turnover has stabilized after a dramatic drop from 40-50% to less than 5% in recent years.

The students at Gilbert Stuart represent 44 different cultures. Of the 873 students, 513 (59%) are Hispanic, 204 (23%) are African-American, 85 (9.7%) are Asian, 64 (7.3%) are white and 7 (0.8%) are Native American. Twenty percent of the students receive special education services, and 14% are included in the ESL program. Ninety-eight percent of the school population receives free or reduced-price lunch.

The full-time parent coordinator is responsible for providing a family literacy program, surveying the needs of the family, creating a schedule of workshops and acting as a liaison between home and school. The Parent Association volunteers to sit on school committees, volunteer within the school and participate in school and neighborhood functions.

The school has established a business partnership with the New England Gas Company, which has become an integral part of daily activities at Gilbert Stuart by providing tutors, hands-on science demonstrations, recognition ceremonies, and awards to the school.

The West End Community School at Gilbert Stuart (WECSGS), in conjunction with the Providence School Department and the Casey Foundation, establishes an integrated system in which the school and community-based after-school and other out-of-school time programs are utilized to provide maximum benefits for disadvantaged students.

### **3. PORTRAIT OF GILBERT STUART MIDDLE SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT**

As you enter Gilbert Stuart Middle School, you cannot help but notice the stately and serene beauty of this historic Greco-Roman style building with spacious corridors, bright, large rooms, and well-lighted stairwells. The entire school is quite clean. Once inside, everyone is enveloped in a safe and friendly environment, which is in sharp contrast to the troubled neighborhood that surrounds it.

The diversity of the students becomes immediately apparent. Children come in every color, shape and size imaginable. The different accents and languages blend together, and the chatter of all students becomes one loud voice exclaiming excitement, happiness, and an eagerness to learn.

The administrators, teachers and staff genuinely care about their students. When the principal speaks of her staff, she says she has been “handed a gift!” The staff also expresses excitement about what is happening within the school. A new administrative team is in place. Teacher leaders abound. Student behavior is excellent. The district administration says the principal is “extraordinary and dynamic.” Teachers, students, staff and parents are very happy she is here. They say, this year, they have a voice. She is listening. She is taking them on a journey in education; she is bringing their visions to life.

The school community successfully reaches out to parents and community partnerships. Everyone works together to give these students the best chance for success. However, some areas require attention now. These include how students are grouped (which gives them little chance to ‘mix with’ one another), the incomplete implementation of the math curriculum, the difficulty this diverse population has with reading, and the dearth of technology support, which prevents students from fully utilizing all of the hardware that is in place.



## 4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

### Conclusions

Students write extensively in many of their classes. Their writing is found in journal entries, portfolios, reports, reflections and solutions to problems. However, the quality of their writing varies. In some cases, their writing pieces are short factual responses and brief summaries that exhibit low-level writing skills. Some students effectively develop writing samples using prompts. Students' general awareness of the writing process frequently transfers into successful use, although students spend considerable time editing their own work, sometimes at the expense of revising and developing their voice. In other cases, students write with ease and express confidence in their expertise. They develop creative pieces that demonstrate a higher level of writing proficiency. For example, students' translations of historical documents into modern day language are impressive. In these instances, students make positive steps that result in improved writing. This level of proficiency is evident in their performance on the Writing Effectiveness subtest of the 2002, as well as the 2003 New Standards Reference Examinations. *(observing classes, following students, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2002, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, meeting with the school improvement team, students, and district administrator)*

Struggling readers can be found in every class. Most work hard to decode and develop their vocabularies, while others easily convert the written text into meaningful information. While round robin reading and teacher reading are the norm, students are learning various reading strategies and using them to increase their reading proficiency. Most students competently refer to their notes and textbooks to develop their responses to teacher questions during class discussions. Some also read intently during independent reading time, but many say they have difficulty reading quietly in their content area classes due to the background chatter occurring around them. This affects their ability to complete their work. Most students work toward achieving the standard of reading 25 books independently, yet some have not taken ownership for meeting this standard and do not read books for pleasure on their own. While their reading scores are low, students are developing their reading proficiency in the face of various language obstacles and the limited prior knowledge they have gained from outside of the school environment. *(following students, meeting with the school improvement team, students, district administrator, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Students' knowledge of math is limited. In math classes, students work on various skills, such as problem solving (using fractions and geometric figures) and constructing and interpreting graphs, as well as solving algebraic equations. Yet, student understanding of math concepts generally is quite poor; therefore, their ability to interpret, apply, analyze and problem solve are in developmental stages. Students express confusion about where to begin when they are using problem-solving strategies without teacher guidance. Many quickly become frustrated. In other classes across the curriculum students are more successful at problem solving activities that do not involve complex math. Difficulties in reading comprehension and basic math skills impede students' ability to perform multi-step performance tasks independently. The students' achievement on the state assessments in math corroborates these findings. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, school administrators, meeting with the students, school and district administrators, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Many students feel that their primary responsibility is to do well in school. Despite the high incidence of poverty and their many language obstacles, most students are excited to come to school and want to be successful. Their enthusiasm is contagious. Many talk about their future goals, such as doing well in high school, going to college, and getting a good job. (In a 2003 career survey, 90% of the eighth grade students said they would like to go to college.) Most take pride in their achievements, and their school success is admired, not frowned upon, by their peers. The school is their home, and they feel safe; they love it here. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, and school administrators)*

### **Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning**

Most students value education as the vehicle to success.

Students' hard work and enthusiasm are evident across the curriculum.

Students struggle to read and write effectively.

Overall, acquiring math knowledge is a great challenge for students.

## 5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

### Conclusions

Despite considerable student language challenges, the successful teaching of writing is generally evident across the curriculum. Teachers have adopted the model of the Writer's Workshop as their vehicle for teaching writing. Teachers report that this model helps them take students to higher achievement levels in their writing. Instructional consistency and optimum learning result from the combined efforts of the Literacy Coach, and the willingness of the teachers to learn from their own practice, so they can improve their craft. Teachers provide numerous opportunities for students to engage in "writing to learn" such as reflections, summaries, and journals. They design creative and rigorous tasks to assess writing achievement. Teachers productively teach writing skills and concepts, which help students to become successful writers across the curriculum. These teaching methods have resulted in improved student performance on the New Standards Reference Examination Writing Effectiveness subtest. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, meeting with district administrators, parents, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing 2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, classroom assessments, records of professional development activities)*

Teachers are working hard to teach their students to read. Most teachers express a strong desire to obtain the additional skills and books that are required to meet the reading needs of their students. Teachers feel that the addition of a literacy coach in the school has been a positive step in that direction. Teachers in many classrooms seek out her expertise as a resource and instructional model to help students develop their reading skills. However, their use of the reading process, which includes pre-reading, reading, and post reading strategies, is at the emergent level. Teachers report that professional development in this area is underway. Teachers use the Scope and Sequence curriculum across the content areas to increase reading proficiency. They incorporate graphic organizers, reader response journals, notebooks, vocabulary books, word walls, and student work in the classroom. Most teachers honor the diversity of their students and are patient with the pace of the individual learner. This allows the students the time they need to develop their reading skills and to achieve. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing records of professional development activities, district and school policies and practices, discussing student work with teachers)*

In all math classes, teacher-directed instruction prevails. Students watch the teacher model the solving of problems on the board or overhead projector, and then they attempt to complete the practice problems. There is little follow-up to check students' work. Teachers seldom use supplementary materials and manipulatives. While many students sit together, little authentic group work takes place. Students say "math is boring." Few teachers provide the instruction that students need to participate effectively in group discussions and group work. There is little differentiated instruction to compensate for the wide-ranging ability levels. Strategies for solving multi-step performance tasks are not evident. The students' understanding of math concepts is very weak. Most instruction does not involve students in the practice of high level, critical thinking skills. Some teachers express their desire to have additional help in the effective instruction of math. They say that the potential for a new math coach exists in plans for next year, and they would welcome the help. At the same time, some teachers in other core classes successfully employ problem solving within their own content areas such as conducting laboratory experiments and involving students in answering the question "What would you do if...?" These types of activities result in students' use of higher level thinking skills and, at the same time, engage them more fully in their learning. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, and district administrator, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing classroom textbooks, completed and ongoing student work)*

Teachers work hard to make their teaching effective by investing their personal and professional time in courses and workshops and by collaborating with one another. They see this framework as a vehicle for improving their instruction and their students' learning. Most teachers say they embrace the protocol of the Institute for Learning through the use of Learning Walks™, Clear Expectations™, and the models of student work, standards and rubrics that are posted on their classroom walls. They say these are integral to their work in taking students to higher levels of success. Students acknowledge that they know what is expected of them, and they are challenged to work hard to become successful. Teachers provide an effective focus for increasing student learning in all curricular areas. *(following students, talking with teachers and school administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, reviewing records of professional development activities, school improvement plan, classroom assessments)*

**Commendations for Gilbert Stuart Middle School**

Cohesive and collaborative teaching staff

Teachers who embrace professional development

Great strides in writing across the curriculum

Caring, nurturing and dedicated teachers

**Recommendations for Gilbert Stuart Middle School**

Continue effective writing instruction. Emphasize all aspects of the Writer's Workshop.

Maintain the professional development that is underway. Implement professional development tools and ideas more effectively in the classroom.

Expand the use of the model of the Reader's Workshop to further address the diverse needs of the students. Continue to use the resources provided by your literacy coach to improve your instruction.

Enliven problem solving by using manipulatives and supplemental materials to develop higher level thinking skills in your students. Create or adopt a common model for problem solving instruction in all subject areas. Provide teachers with the support of a math coach.

Apply authentic grouping practices and differentiated instruction to motivate students and to meet the needs of all students in all curricular areas.

**Recommendations for Providence School District:**

Continue your support through effective professional development opportunities. Continue to support the work of the Literacy Coach at Gilbert Stuart Middle School.

## 6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

### Conclusions

Teams do not take full advantage of the flexibility in grouping that “teaming” provides. The school reports that, except for 8th grade math, students are heterogeneously grouped. And yet, students at all grade levels appear to be grouped homogeneously. As a result, they stay together in classes all day with very little regrouping. Some students identify themselves as being in the “dumb group” and others as being in the “smart group.” Also, the existence of separate Special Education and ESL teams isolates these students, both socially and academically. Students with special needs are not participating fully in the learning experiences and expectations of their grade level peers. Therefore, the school’s inclusion program is not adequate to meet the needs of the special education students. Regular education teachers state that they have not received training in the inclusion model, and authentic collaboration between regular education and special education teachers is not evident. Overall, these grouping practices negatively impact how students perceive their own abilities, as well as their potential to achieve. *(following students, reviewing district and school policies and practices, school improvement plan, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, school administrators, meeting with students, school and district administrators)*

The implementation of the Readers Workshop and the Writers Workshop enhances instruction across the curriculum. The literacy coach is integral in the implementation of these emerging programs. Many teachers willingly invite her into their classrooms and utilize her as an invaluable resource. On the other hand, the instruction of math is not as thriving. Teacher-directed lessons, with students as passive participants across all math classes, lead to student indifference in the work of the class. Teachers want help in implementing all aspects of the new math program, but a math coach is not in place, and the district has provided limited professional development in this area. The limited use of supplemental materials and manipulatives to implement the new math program results in low student interest, learning and achievement. *(following students, observing classes, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, classroom assessments, district and school policies and practices)*

A technology plan exists for the district, and obvious strides have been made at this school to implement this plan. Classrooms presently are adequately equipped and wired with computers and printers. In addition, televisions and VCR’s are also readily available. Two computer labs exist for computer application classes, and two additional labs have been created for student use but are not presently operational. Although hardware is prominently in place throughout the building, the software and other support needed to make effective use of this technology is not in place. The school staff reports that the number of technology assistants for the Providence Schools is not sufficient to meet the needs of this school in a timely fashion. Therefore, the maximum use of the technology available to support teaching and learning does not take place. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, district strategic plan)*

The administrators' leadership in school discipline is impressive and well ordered, especially during times of student movement throughout the building. The administrative team is omnipresent during these times on all four levels of the school. While most teachers successfully control classroom discipline, a few lack the skills they need for effective classroom management. School and team rules are clearly posted throughout the school. Students respect the rules, and almost everyone follows them. During instructional periods, few students are in the hallways. Many, both students and adults, express that there has been a huge change in student behavior and respect this year. This results in a school environment that is conducive to optimal learning. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, reviewing district and school policies and practices, talking with students, teachers, parents, and school administrators)*

The Gilbert Stuart Middle School is located in a diverse neighborhood where few parents use English as their first language. For years parents felt detached from the environment of this urban middle school. Today, parent involvement is an emerging strength, mainly due to the untiring efforts of many at the school, especially the family coordinator. Through her cheerful personality, hard work and unlimited dedication, she has managed to bring more families into the fabric of the school. And at the same time, teams of teachers attempt to involve parents in many aspects of their children's education. The entire staff constantly tries to think of new ways to enlist parents and to involve them in family connections such as "The Backpacker" program, "Happy Heads", and clothing drives. Through the efforts of outreach programs, after-school programs, parent nights, and evening parent visits, more and more parents view the school as a viable resource. When parents and the school work together, the students reap the benefits. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, and school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan)*

Strong community support to increase student achievement in both academics and personal growth is evident. Ties with private and public agencies such as the New England Gas Company, the Providence Public Library, the YMCA, United Way and the West End Community School at Gilbert Stuart (WECSGS) help to meet the needs of the students by providing monetary support for families, as well as for before-school, in-school, and after-school programs. Due to the present school library schedule, students have limited access to the school library. The community library has stepped in to help. Students and teachers rely on the resources at the Knight Memorial Library, both during and after school, to perform research, outside reading, and for general academic support. This is an invaluable resource for this school population. *(meeting with the school improvement team, school administrators, and parents, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing the SALT Visit Team binder, reviewing school improvement plan, talking with students, teachers, parents, and school administrators)*

Out of the ashes, a 'crown jewel' is emerging at Gilbert Stuart through the dynamic leadership and vision of its administrators. The climate is a testament to the administrators' capability to foster a friendly, safe and organized working and learning environment. The principal's professionalism and knowledge, one assistant principal's passionate support and connection to the community and the other assistant principal's dedication and quiet strength blend to form an exceptional administrative team. The district reports that this school quickly is becoming a cornerstone and model for the Providence Schools. The school improvement team strives to develop all students as life long learners and leaders. The leadership has successfully found the missing pieces in the Gilbert Stuart puzzle. *(meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, parents, school administrators)*



**Commendations for Gilbert Stuart Middle School**

Visionary leadership  
Impressive school-wide discipline  
Positive, safe, nurturing school climate  
Cohesive faculty, staff and administration  
Exemplary parent outreach programs  
School as a cornerstone of the community

**Recommendations for Gilbert Stuart Middle School**

Implement authentic grouping practices. Improve the inclusion program with support to include more students in regular classes.

Utilize technology more effectively to enhance student learning.

Provide focused professional development in the math curriculum: Scope and Sequence. Provide training for those who are implementing the Connected Math series. Provide teachers with the support of a math coach.

Continue your dynamic leadership and vision for the school.

Continue to utilize the literacy coach, and use test data to address equity gaps.

Maintain your high family and community involvement in this school.

Continue to seek outside funding for after school activities.

**Recommendations for Providence School Department:**

Provide adequate technical support to allow the school to utilize its technology at optimum levels.

Support the school with adequate funding for its current and future programs.

Provide professional development for the full implementation of the Connected Math series. Assist the school in obtaining a math coach.

Support and enhance the school/community programs that are underway here.

## **7. FINAL ADVICE TO GILBERT STUART MIDDLE SCHOOL**

The various components of the Gilbert Stuart Middle School community combine to create a positive learning environment for students. Parents and the community are playing their parts to support the school in its work. Administrators, teachers, staff and students are enthusiastic and goal oriented. Administrators set the tone. Teachers strive to improve their practice and their students' success through professional development, collaboration and collegiality. Students focus on meeting standards and developing skills that will enhance their lives. And the staff supports everyone in this work.

It is time now to focus on some areas that need attention and improvement. High expectations clearly have been set for students at Gilbert Stuart. These expectations must be set for everyone across the curriculum. Improvement in instruction, especially in math, needs to take place. Changes in grouping and scheduling procedures, as well as the addition of a math coach and additional technical support, can help your school achieve this goal.

You surmount many challenges and obstacles by the hard work and dedicated spirit that prevails throughout the school. Great things take place in this school every day. You are headed in the best direction. Keep going. You will truly become the 'crown jewel' of Providence. Accept our report as a helpful tool to further your achievements and the achievements of all of your students. Good luck to you in everything you do.

## **ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT**

### **Gilbert Stuart Middle School**

February 27, 2004

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits are conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition.

Since unexpected circumstances might result in either the team or the school straying too far from the protocol for a visit, Catalpa monitors both the school and the team during a visit regarding the conduct of the visit.

Most often actual visit events or issues do not challenge a report's legitimacy and Catalpa's monitoring and endorsement is routine. A district administrator, principal, faculty member or parent may not like a report, or think it is too negative, or think the visit should have been conducted in a manner that is not consistent with the protocol. None of these represent a challenge to a report's legitimacy; concerns that might challenge an endorsement are based on events that stray too far from the protocol.

The Catalpa review of this visit and this report was routine.

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

- discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began
- daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit
- observation of a portion of the visit
- discussion with the principal regarding any concerns about the visit at the time of the visit
- thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final version form

The findings from the review are:

1. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff.
2. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that is consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
3. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
4. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD  
Catalpa Ltd.  
March 19, 2004

## REPORT APPENDIX

### Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examined test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Gilbert Stuart Middle School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team built its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, this visit allowed the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Gilbert Stuart Middle School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following sources of evidence:

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 12 students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
  - teachers*
  - school improvement team*
  - school and district administrators*
  - students*
  - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
  - district and school policies and practices*
  - Providence School Department ReKindling the Dream-A Learning Plan, September 1999 to June 2005*
  - Providence Public Schools Administrative Procedures binder*
  - Providence Public Schools Scope and Sequence documents*
  - Providence Public Schools District-Wide Code of Behavior Grades 6-12*
  - Providence Public Schools District Technology Plan*
  - Providence Public Schools District Report Card*
  - Providence Public Schools District Balanced Literacy Framework*
  - Providence Public Schools Disciplinary Codes*
  - Providence Public Schools Harassment Policy folder*

Agreement between the Providence Teachers Union, AFT Local 958 and the Providence School Board, *September 1, 2001 to August 31, 2004.*

District Demographics *folder*

Lift Framework for Teaching and Learning binder

records of professional development activities

Gilbert Stuart Self-Study committee Data *folder*

Gilbert Stuart Quantitative Assessment Data *folder*

Gilbert Stuart Behavior management Plan

Gilbert Stuart Teacher Evaluation Instrument

Gilbert Stuart Teacher Handbook

Gilbert Stuart Middle School Yearbook, *2001, 2002, 2003*

Gilbert Stuart Gazette, *Fall/Winter Edition, 2003*

*classroom assessments*

*Gilbert Stuart Middle School student agendas*

Providence One Plan, *school improvement plan for Gilbert Stuart Middle School*

district strategic plan

Principal Leadership Reflective Practice Portfolio, Nicole Mathis, *2003-2004*

Preparing our Students For New Standards Testing *document*

*2002, 2003 SALT Survey report (not available)*

*classroom textbooks*

*2003 Information Works!*

*2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries*

*2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*

*School and District Report Cards*

## **State Assessment Results for Gilbert Stuart Middle School**

Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

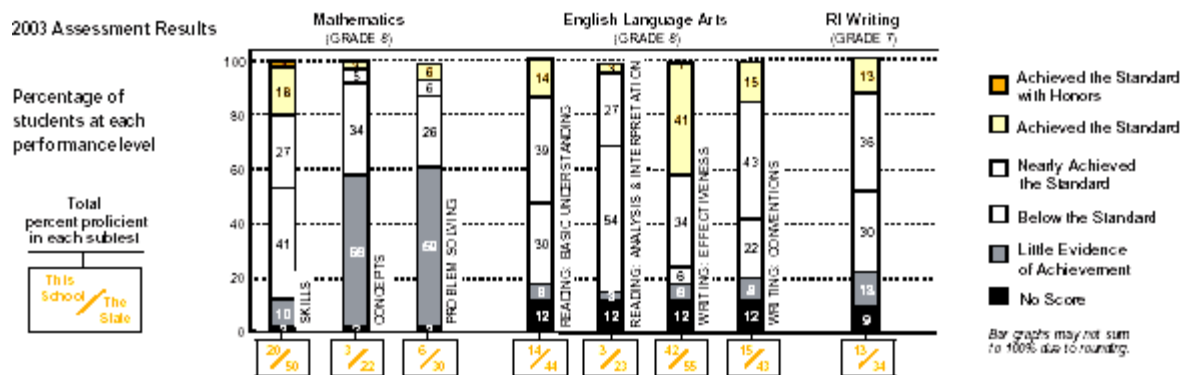
This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

- ◆ *against performance standards;*
- ◆ *compared to similar students in the state;*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school;*
- ◆ *and over time.*

### RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

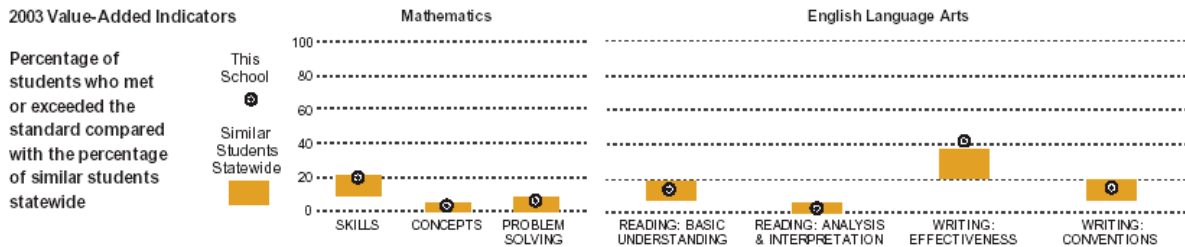
**Table 1. 2002-03 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments**



### RESULTS COMPARED TO SIMILAR STUDENTS IN THE STATE

This chart includes the performance levels of students with special education needs, students participating in ESL or bilingual programs, low socio-economic status (a composite of income level, racial background and parental education), as well as the performance of students with none of these characteristics. Taking all these characteristics into account, the graph displays the overall performance of students in this school compared to - a group of students from across the state whose characteristics match this school's students.

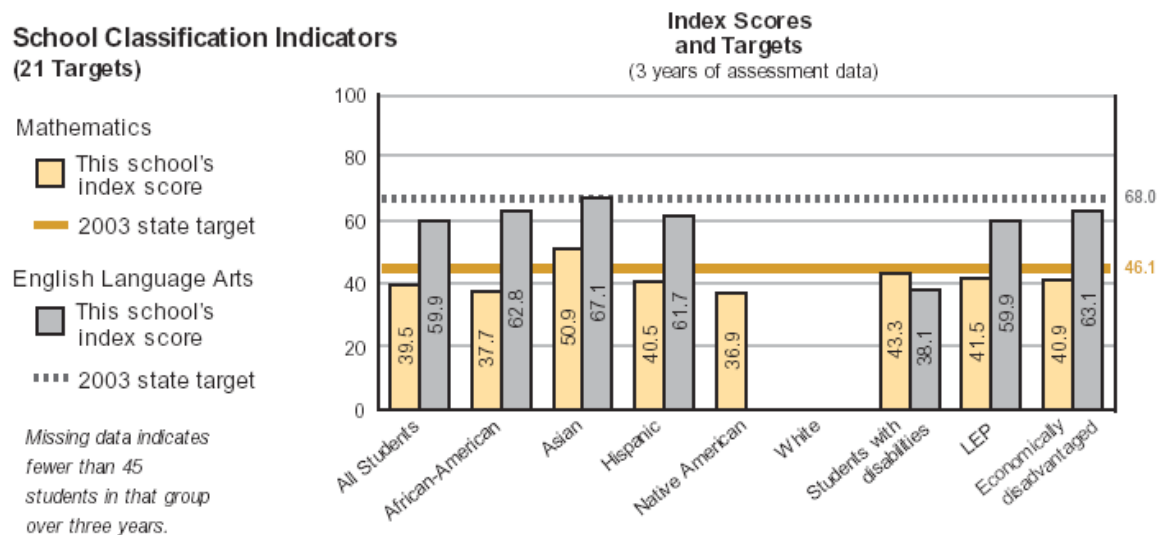
**Table 2. 2002-2003 Student Results in Comparison to Similar Students Statewide**



## STUDENT CLASSIFICATION INDICATORS

An important way to display student results is across different groups of students with different characteristics who are in the school. This display, showing targets and index scores, as established in accordance with the No Child Left Behind federal legislation, creates information about how well the school meets the learning needs of its various students. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows the results based on three years of testing.

**Table 3. 2002-2003 Results across Subgroups within the School**



**Index scores** range from 0 to 100. They are based on the performance levels of all students in both English language arts and mathematics, for all subtests, over three years. For further detail, see the 2003 School Reports Cards at [www.ridoe.net](http://www.ridoe.net).

## SCHOOL REPORT CARD

The Gilbert Stuart Middle School has been categorized as low performing, not improving on the basis of its New Standards Reference Examination assessment results from 1998 to 2002. The following is the school report card that shows performance in relation to the 2003 annual measurable objectives (AMO) in accordance with the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. Gilbert Stuart is categorized as a school in need of improvement making insufficient progress. The school is in its second year of needing improvement.



Information Works! data for Gilbert Stuart Middle School is available at <http://www.rido.net>.

**THE GILBERT STUART MIDDLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM**

Deborah Britto  
Instructional Coach

Dennis Tosoni  
Union Representative

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Grade 8 Science Teacher

Richard Ardito  
Special Education Resource Teacher

Pat Geary  
Grade 8 History Teacher

Margaret Simms  
Grade 6 Science Teacher

Kadesa Huffman  
Grade 8 English Teacher

Dawn Simmonelli  
Grade 8 Math Teacher

Kathleen Winsor  
Guidance Counselor

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ESL Teacher

Genevieve Eaton  
ESL Teacher

Cynthia Robles  
Special Education Teacher

Andres Javier  
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